



United States Department of the Interior

EL CAMINO REAL DE TIERRA ADENTRO NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Division of Resource Planning, Use, and Protection
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the Proposed El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS) jointly prepared the CMP/FEIS for the Camino Real, which provided the principal travel and communication route between New Spain, Mexico, and New Mexico for more than 300 years. The CMP/FEIS was prepared to meet legislative requirements of P.L. 106-307, dated October 13, 2000.

The CMP/FEIS focuses on the trail's purpose and significance, issues and concerns related to current conditions along the trail, resource protection, visitor experience and use, and long-term administrative and management objectives. Elements of the proposed plan have been developed in cooperation with Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as nonprofit and non-Governmental organizations, the entities that will form the core of the partnerships with the national historic trail. The plan provides alternative visions for managing the trail between El Paso, Texas, and San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico. The plan also addresses amendments to the Bureau of Land Management's Taos, White Sands, and Mimbres Resource Management Plans related to protection of scenic values. The draft was released on October 1, 2002. It has now undergone extensive public review and has been finalized in light of the comments received from the public.

Public involvement was encouraged and developed through 21 public meetings (eight Scoping Meetings, three Community Design Sessions, four Appreciative Inquiry Sessions, and six "open houses" for discussion of the draft CMP/EIS); the creation and distribution of a project newsletter; and the development of a web-based resource that tracked the planning process and eventually included the full text of the plan, educational resources, background information, and a comment tool (www.elcaminoreal.org). Fifty Indian communities were contacted by letter and/or telephone several times during plan development, resulting in six face-to-face meetings with individual tribes or Pueblos; three public meetings also were attended by American Indian representatives.

Public comment ended on January 15, 2003. Comments were solicited from interested parties identified during the scoping process, at public meetings, and through the web page. A total of 56 individuals, representing a number of public agencies and private interests, submitted comments on the draft plan. Appendix J of the CMP/FEIS contains summarized comments and responses. The public comments focused on: 1) The definition of the trail used in the plan as well as particulars of the trail route and associated historic properties; 2) The impact of national historic trail designation on lands and properties not under federal management; 3) The impact of increased visitation along trail routes and proposed auto tour routes; and 4) The impact of re-classifying federally-managed acreage along approximately 10 miles of the 404-mile trail route to preserve visual resources in the vicinity of well-preserved and interpretable trail resources and trail segments.

Responses to major concerns incorporated into the final document include:

- Trail definition: The definition of the trail used in the document stems from the definition applied in the feasibility/suitability study completed for the trail in 1996, and from the establishing legislation for the trail enacted in October, 2000. Although two communities—Sunland Park, and Taos, New Mexico, which are located at the northern and southern ends of the route in that state, have urged the adoption of a different

trail definition, the plan will keep the “Spanish [colonial] capital to Spanish [colonial] capital” language first introduced in the feasibility/suitability study. Comments regarding the location of various trail routes and alternative routes, and the significance of individual trail properties have been incorporated into the final plan where appropriate.

- Impacts to non-federal lands and resources: The impact of national historic trail designation on non-federally-managed properties has been addressed in the plan. Where appropriate, plan language has been modified to clarify that the management prescriptions described in the plan would be applied to federally-managed properties, that participation in the management program would be entirely voluntary for private land owners and non-federal land managers, and that participation would be facilitated by Camino Real Administration (a joint NPS/BLM program) on a case-by-case basis through the certification process.
- Location of the auto tour route: A portion of the auto tour route has been relocated to accommodate community concerns in the vicinity of La Cieneguilla, New Mexico, a traditional community that expressed fears regarding the poor condition of routes proposed for the auto tour and adverse impacts on the quality of life in this rural area. The auto tour route has been located entirely on all-weather roads to reduce environmental impacts along the trail route on roads not engineered for increased traffic loads.
- Restrictions on uses of public lands: The Visual Resource Management (VRM) re-classification issue was raised by sand, gravel, and aggregate operators concerned that re-classification would adversely impact their access to mineral materials on public and private lands. As outlined in the draft and clarified in the final plan, re-classification would affect slightly fewer than 10 miles of the trail corridor on public lands (less than 2.5% of the length of the trail in the U.S.), and would not preclude the development of any economic interests. Amendments would be made to the White Sands, Mimbres, and Taos Resource Management Plans. Any new, ground-disturbing projects proposed for the re-classified areas would need to meet the VRM objectives; impacts would be mitigated through a variety of measures to reduce visual impacts. No lands are withdrawn as a result of this plan.

The Preferred Alternative from the Draft CMP/DEIS is carried forward, with minor modification, in the proposed CMP/FEIS as the proposed Comprehensive Management Plan. The Preferred Alternative (Proposed Plan) would implement the provisions of the National Trails Systems Act, reflect the public’s vision for the administration and management of the trail, and implement an ambitious program of resource preservation and visitor use.

Copies of this document have been mailed to individuals who submitted original letters, e-mailed responses to the team leaders or submitted email through our web comment tool, or provided oral comments at public hearings, as well as appropriate state and federal agencies and local and tribal governments. In addition, copies have been sent to those persons who received copies of the draft and requested to be on the mailing list for the CMP/FEIS. The CMP/FEIS is available for review at the National Park Service Long-Distance Trails Office, P. O. Box 728/1100 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-0728, or the New Mexico Bureau of Land Management, Division of Resource Planning, Use, and Protection, P.O. Box 27115/1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-0115. The document is also available at www.elcaminoreal.org.

BLM Planning Regulations (43CFR 1610-5.2) state that any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which may be adversely affected may protest. A protest may only raise those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process. The protest must be filed within 30 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of receipt of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. All protests must be in writing and mailed to the following address:

Regular Mail
Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Williams
P.O. Box 66538
Washington, D.C. 20035

Overnight Mail:
Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Williams
1620 L Street, N.W.
Suite 1075
Washington, D.C. 20036

E-mail and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions,

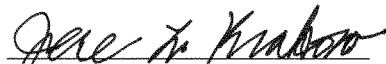
BLM will consider the e-mail or faxed protest as an advance copy and it will receive full consideration. If you wish to provide BLM with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of the BLM protest coordinator at 202- 452-5112, and emails to <Brenda_Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov>.

The protest must contain:

- a. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
- b. A statement of the part or parts of the plan and the issue or issues being protested.
- c. A copy of all documents addressing the issue(s) that the protesting party submitted during the planning process or a statement of the date they were discussed for the record.
- d. A concise statement explaining why the protestor believes the State Director's (BLM) decision is wrong.

Plan approval will be documented in a Record of Decision that will be made available to the public and mailed to all interested parties. Land use plan implementation usually involves on-the-ground management actions and permitted uses which require further analysis and decision making including public involvement and allows for appeals of decisions under applicable regulations. The BLM and NPS, through the Camino Real Administration, plan to use the CMP as the framework for pursuing collaborative management of Camino Real cultural resources. If you have any questions regarding this document, please contact team leads Sarah Schlanger, NM BLM, at 505-438-7454, or Harry Myers, NPS, at 505-988-6717.

Sincerely,



Jere L. Krakow
Superintendent,
National Trails Office - IMR,



Ron Dunton,
Deputy State Director, Resources
BLM New Mexico State Office